

REMARKS

This application contains claims 1-29. Claims 1, 13, 25, 26, 28 and 29 are hereby amended. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 6-10, 13-15, 18-22 and 25-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Duane et al. (U.S. Patent 6,243,721). Applicant has amended independent claims 1, 13, 25, 26, 28 and 29 in order to clarify the distinction of the present invention over the cited art.

Duane describes a system for providing automatic layout capabilities in creating a computer form. When a user selects a control item to place on the form, the preferred coordinates and size of the control item are automatically selected based on the properties of the control item and the size and location of surrounding control items (abstract). Control items may be selected from a list, such as a "Field Chooser Window" (col. 12, lines 55-59, and Fig. 7). A label box may be linked and aligned with a control item (col. 5, lines 56-63). In this way, the control item and label are automatically defined "as a single unit" at the time the new control item is placed on the form (col. 21, lines 54-61).

Claim 1 recites a method for processing a document that includes a plurality of fields. The claim has been amended to clarify that the document in question is one in which contents have been filled into the fields, as indicated in the specification (page 1, lines 3-5, for example). It is these contents that are read out and used in assigning labels to the fields, responsive to rules that are applicable to the contents. In other words, as stated in the specification (page 2, lines 9-14), known rules relating to the contents may be "used by the computer to automatically identify unknown fields in a document or group of documents," and thus to associate the proper label with each field.

Duane, by contrast, clearly relates to creation of blank forms (see col. 1, lines 13-26, for example, as well as Figs. 3, 4, 6 and 19). Although some of the fields in the form may subsequently be filled in with information, this information itself is of no concern to Duane. Since the types of control items and their labels are bound together in Duane's system even before the control items are placed on the form, Duane does not face the problem of having to identify fields by their contents.

Turning now to the specific grounds of rejection of claim 1, it is now clear that Duane does not teach or suggest "a method for processing a document that includes a plurality of fields having respective contents that have been filled into the fields." As noted above, Duane is concerned with creating a blank document. The Examiner correctly stated in the official action

that Duane does not explicitly teach the step of “reading the contents of the fields” (page 3, lines 6-7, in the official action) that is recited in claim 1. Because Duane does not relate at all to information that is filled into a document, he cannot even be taken to suggest the amended step of “reading the respective contents that have been filled into the fields.” Furthermore, since Duane’s labels are bound in advance to the corresponding fields “as a single unit,” Duane also provides no motivation or suggestion of the step of “assigning the labels” using the filled-in field contents.

Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 as amended is patentable over Duane. In view of the patentability of claim 1, claims 2, 3 and 6-10 are believed to be patentable, as well.

Claims 13 and 25 respectively recite apparatus and a computer software product, which operate on principles similar to the method of claim 1. These claims were rejected on the same grounds as claim 1, and have been similarly amended. Therefore, for the reasons stated above, claims 13 and 25 as amended are believed to be patentable over Duane, as are claims 14, 15 and 18-22, which depend from claim 13.

Claims 26, 28 and 29 respectively recite a method, apparatus and computer software product for computerized data processing. These claims have been amended in similar fashion to claims 1, 13 and 25. According to these amended claims, labels are assigned to the fields in a form on a computer responsively to information that has been filled into the form and to geometrical rules indicating an expected geometrical relationship between the fields. As explained above in reference to claim 1, Duane neither teaches nor suggests the use of information that has been filled into the fields of a form in order to identify the fields themselves. Therefore, claims 26, 28 and 29, as amended, are believed to be patentable over Duane, as is claim 27, which depends from claim 26.


Claims 4, 5, 11, 12, 16, 17, 23 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Duane in view of Hetherington (U.S. Patent Application Publication 2002/0010714) or in view of Gupta et al. (U.S. Patent 6,199,079). Hetherington relates to processing of free-format data, while Gupta describes a method of automatically filling in on-line forms. Neither of these references teaches or suggests the elements of independent claims 1 and 13 that are absent from Duane, as explained above. Therefore, in view of the patentability of claims 1 and 13, dependent claims 4, 5, 11, 12, 16, 17, 23 and 24 are believed to be patentable, as well.

Applicant has studied the additional references made of record by the Examiner and believes that all of the claims in the present patent application are patentable over these references, whether the references are taken individually or in any combination.

Applicant believes the amendments and remarks presented hereinabove to be fully responsive to all of the objections and grounds of rejection raised by the Examiner.

In view of these amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that all of the claims in the present application are in order for allowance. Notice to this effect is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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